

Good afternoon Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee.”

My Name is Stephen Boyle and I am a counselor and a coach at Hall High School in West Hartford, CT and I also coach middle school track and field as well as youth lacrosse.

I am here in support SB 456 “An Act Concerning Student Athletes and Concussions”

While it’s probably difficult to tell from looking at me, I am a former Division I basketball player who has been around sports for a very long time. I coached three years in New York City, 5 years in Seattle, WA and besides the coaching I’ve done in CT over the past 12 years, I –along with my wife who is Athletic Director in Hartford – have founded a Multi-Sports Academy intended to directly attack those folks that are encouraging kids to specialize in one sport and play only that sport – which I think segues nicely into why I am here today. And in the interest of full disclosure, I should also tell you that I am here as a parent who has 3 daughters each of whom plays at least three sports and who I am at most times glad to report – play them very aggressively.

But not a day goes by that I don’t worry about my girls safety – and when I say “my girls” – I mean the many that I coach and the three that I parent. Until recent years, I’ll be quite honest, it was the dreaded ACL injury that I feared most. I’ve seen over 10 tears live and in person over my career –and as a counselor have helped many others through what is both an exhausting physical and emotional recovery. But now my fear of concussions absolutely trumps that of the ACL and other physical injuries. What we have managed to learn in recent years about concussions and their long term effects I believe will literally save the minds of our children years down the road. It is perhaps the Irish Catholic guilt in me that makes me sadly look back on the young woman I’ve sent back into the heat of battle declaring that they should just “suck it up” or “shake it off”. But you should know there are still folks out there – either because of ignorance – or because of old school philosophies who are putting kids back into games and practices with total disregard for the health of that child and with an emphasis on winning. The pressures some coaches are under – either real or perceived – cloud their judgment and they will ask kids to lie about their concussion symptoms or simply ignore them and attribute them to something else. This legislation will take that decision making out of the hands of those adults – who are in most cases actually really good people - and put them in the hands of the doctors and athletic trainers who are trained and who accept the liability should *their* judgment be wrong.

Look – would you ever want your dentist to diagnose whether or not your child has appendicitis? Why then should we let coaches decide whether an athlete is still concussed?

As a coach and as a parent – having an Athletic Trainer or Doctor make this decision for me – will allow me to not let conflicts of interest take hold. Everybody wants their kids to play and get back into the game as soon as possible, but more than that – we want our kids to live long healthy lives with full cognitive abilities. This law will wisely allow that to happen while perhaps sacrificing a return to play one or two games sooner. Thank you for your consideration.